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Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014)

I. Introduction

1. The present report is the sixteenth submitted pursuant to paragraph 17 of Security Council resolution 2139 (2014), paragraph 10 of Security Council resolution 2165 (2014) and paragraph 5 of Security Council resolution 2191 (2014), in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report, every 30 days, on the implementation of the resolutions by all parties to the conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic.

2. The information contained in the present report is based on the data available to United Nations agencies on the ground, from the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and from open sources. Data from United Nations agencies and partners on their humanitarian deliveries have been reported for the period from 1 March to 31 May 2015 when available. More recent data have been included when available. Pursuant to paragraph 3 of resolution 2191 (2014), the Security Council decided to conduct a six-month review of the implementation of paragraphs 2 and 3 of resolution 2165 (2014). Information relevant to those paragraphs is included in the annex to the report.

II. Major developments

A. Political/military

3. Widespread conflict and high levels of violence continued throughout the Syrian Arab Republic in May. Indiscriminate aerial bombings, including the use of barrel bombs, by Government forces and indiscriminate shelling by non-State armed groups and extremist and listed terrorist groups[1] resulted in the deaths, injuries and displacement of civilians. The conduct of hostilities by all parties continued to be characterized by widespread disregard for the rules of international humanitarian law and their obligation to protect civilians.

[1] On 30 May 2013, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Nusra Front were designated as terrorist groups by the Security Council under resolution 1267 (1999). The two groups operate in the Syrian Arab Republic.

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4. In Aleppo governorate, heavy fighting continued in May with indiscriminate attacks by Government forces, non-State armed groups and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). According to information received by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), over 200 civilians, including 24 children, were killed by Government forces across the governorate during May. For example, on 30 May, according to OHCHR sources, more than 70 civilians were killed and dozens injured in three different aerial attacks. Reports indicate that two barrel bombs hit a market in Al-Bab town controlled by ISIL, north-east of Aleppo city, killing at least 45 civilians and injuring dozens more. Sources informed OHCHR that no ISIL buildings or combatants were hit in the attack. Analysis by the Operational Satellite Applications Programme of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research of satellite imagery collected on 3 June, indicated multiple destroyed structures in the vicinity of the market, corresponding with the reports of barrel bombing. Also on 30 May, barrel bombs reportedly hit residential areas in the Al-Shaar and Al-Ferdous neighbourhoods in eastern Aleppo city, killing over 30 civilians and injuring several more.

5. Non-State armed groups continued to launch attacks inside Aleppo city, with a reported increase in the number of projectiles landing on Government-controlled parts of the city in April and May, including mortars, gas cylinders and homemade rockets. According to local sources, at least 86 civilians, including 12 women and 33 children, were killed in May. On 15 June, approximately 200 shells landed on Al-Neil Street, Al-Khalidieah, New Shahba, Al-Sulimanieh, New Syrian, and Faysal street neighbourhoods of Aleppo city. At least 30 civilians were reportedly killed, including 2 women and 9 children, and more than 100 civilians injured.

6. At the end of May, ISIL made advances in northern Aleppo to a number of villages held by non-State armed groups, most significantly taking over Souran town located around 10 km from the Bab al-Salam border crossing. ISIL forces further mobilized south towards Mare'a and north towards the Shimareen area. As at mid-June, however, ISIL advancements were repelled following heavy clashes with non-State armed groups.

7. In Idlib governorate, heavy fighting continued during the reporting period. In May, according to information gathered by OHCHR, Government aerial attacks increased in Idlib following the territorial gains made by non-State armed groups, killing and injuring several civilians. For example, on 14 May, barrel bombs dropped by Government forces on the town of Khan Shaykhun reportedly killed 1 woman and 2 children and injured at least 15 civilians. On 16 May, Government planes reportedly hit the towns of Kafr Oueid and Saraqeb with missiles, killing at least 15 civilians in each attack. Furthermore, according to reports on 8 June, air strikes by Government forces reportedly killed at least 49 civilians when a strike hit a public square in Al Janudiya. The two largely Shia majority villages of Fouah and Kefraya, north-east of Idlib city, remain surrounded by non-State armed groups.

8. Heavy fighting continued in and around Damascus during May, resulting in civilian casualties and damage to civilian property. Non-State armed groups targeted the western part of Damascus city with mortar rounds. For example, on 19 May, mortar rounds hit al-Safarat neighbourhood, causing damage to buildings including the Embassy of the Russian Federation. Also on 19 May, several mortar rounds hit al-Thaqafi School in the al-Maleki neighbourhood, killing 1 teacher and injuring at least 20 schoolchildren. Two other mortar rounds hit al-Mazra'a neighbourhood,

killing one civilian. On 4 May, a non-State armed group wearing Syrian military uniforms infiltrated the Rukn Al-Din neighbourhood in Central Damascus and carried out two person-borne improvised explosive device attacks, followed by a brief gun battle with Government forces, reportedly causing three deaths.

9. Following ISIL infiltration of Yarmouk camp in Damascus in early April, the humanitarian situation in the camp deteriorated as a result of frequent armed clashes and the use of heavy weapons. On 26 and 27 May, Government forces reportedly hit the camp with six barrel bombs, killing one person and injuring four others. Armed clashes reportedly continued inside Yarmouk between pro-government Palestinian factions and non-State armed groups in the northern area of the camp. Fighting also continued between ISIL and non-State armed groups around Al-Hajar Al-Aswad and Al-Taqadom districts south of Yarmouk, as well as between the Nusra Front and Palestinian armed groups. The continued absence of protection for civilians in Yarmouk remains a grave concern.

10. During the reporting period, fighting continued in Rif Dimashq. Government forces continued to carry out air strikes on several towns in eastern and western Ghouta resulting in civilian casualties, including children. In Moadamiyet, the local agreement in place since 2014 remains fragile. On 4 May, Government forces reportedly dropped barrel bombs on the western part of the town which, according to OHCHR sources, resulted in the injury of at least 10 civilians. The Syrian authorities have continued to implement strict restrictions on the movement of both civilians and supplies to and from Moadamiyet since mid-February, creating a dire humanitarian situation inside the town. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent visited Moadamiyet on 15 June for the first time since December 2014 and delivered medical supplies sufficient for 5,000 people.

11. On 16 May, Government forces carried out an air strike on Douma town in eastern Ghouta, which reportedly hit a school, killing five schoolchildren and injuring at least 10 others. On 20 May, Government forces reportedly dropped bombs on Douma, injuring at least 12 civilians, including women and children.

12. In Qalamoun, the situation remains fluid following an intensification of fighting in early May. Some media sources reported on the advances made by pro-Government forces backed by Hizbullah around the towns of Jirud and Falita in the eastern part of the governorate while in western Qalmoun fighting continued between non-State armed groups and ISIL.

13. Fighting also continued between Government forces and ISIL in Deir ez-Zor governorate during the reporting period. Reports indicate that ISIL fighters continued their offensive to capture the remaining Government-controlled areas of Deir ez-Zor city, besieged by ISIL forces, including launching an attack on the military airport on 6 May. Government forces also continued their aerial attacks on the ISIL-controlled areas of Deir ez-Zor governorate. According to OHCHR sources, on 18 May, eight civilians were killed, including two children and four women, when Government forces carried out an air strike on Albo Omar village in Deir ez-Zor.

14. In Hasakeh governorate, on 9 May, the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) regained control over some areas that had previously been captured by ISIL, following fierce clashes in Arna and Hadid. On 30 May, ISIL launched a major assault on Hasakeh city and reached the city's southern periphery, where clashes

took place with pro-Government forces. One civilian was reported dead and another nine injured as a result of multiple mortar attacks launched by ISIL in the centre of the city on 31 May.

15. Following clashes with the Government and pro-Government forces, ISIL captured the ancient city of Palmyra/Tadmur on 21 May and the surrounding gas fields of al-Hail and Arak. Following the takeover, the city has been hit by Government forces, causing civilian casualties. Between 24 and 26 May, at least 27 civilians were reportedly killed when Government planes hit a civilian area of Palmyra/Tadmur. Seven other civilians, including two children, were reportedly killed as a result of Government shelling of a neighbourhood suspected of harbouring ISIL fighters. In the western part of Palmyra/Tadmur, OHCHR sources reported that ISIL planted landmines to prevent Government forces from launching attacks.

16. On 15 June, YPG and the Free Syrian Army took control of Tel Abyad city and border crossing from ISIL as well as the neighbouring town of Ayn el Issa, with the support of the international anti-ISIL coalition air strikes. An estimated 23,000 people from the city were displaced into Turkey between 13 and 16 June, and an estimated additional 35,000 people moved to Raqqa city from Tel Abyad, Ayn el Issa and Suluk in May.

17. Civilian infrastructure continued to be attacked during the reporting period, and basic services, including electricity and water, continued to be cut. For example, according to reports by local partners, on 4 June ISIL targeted an electricity substation in Panorama Square south of Hasakeh city, cutting off 80 per cent of the power supply to the city. The current population of the city is estimated at 500,000 people.

18. Schools continue to be affected by violence. According to information verified by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in April, six schools in the Ariha subdistrict of Idlib governorate were occupied and being used as temporary bases, shelters and barracks by Government troops recently withdrawn from Idlib. On 7 April 2015, the Sayadiy School in Arihawas was attacked and the school building damaged, and on 24 April a mortar hit the Seblo School, causing damage to one classroom. The school was being used as a shelter for internally displaced persons at the time of the attack. There were no child casualties reported. On 25 April, a rocket attack on the Banat Ariha School caused damage to the school building. Similar attacks were also reported in March by UNICEF in Idlib, Hama and Rif Dimashq governorates.

19. Tens of thousands of people continued to be displaced by fighting and insecurity during the reporting period. In Idlib governorate, on 31 May, an estimated 52,500 people were displaced from the town of Ariha mainly towards Idlib city, including people who had previously been displaced, in anticipation of possible air strikes by Government forces. As at the end of May, 50 per cent of the more than 175,000 people displaced from Idlib city are estimated to have returned to their homes. Following the takeover of Palmyra/Tadmur by ISIL, some 6,500 civilians have fled the areas surrounding the city to Qaryatein village, while another 2,000 have fled to Mahin village. Also, in Homs governorate, 22,000 people were displaced from the villages of Tesnine and Kafran following the advances made by non-State armed groups. In Aleppo, over 2,000 people were reportedly displaced as a result of ISIL advances in the northern part of the governorate in late May and early June. Furthermore, the increased attacks on Government-controlled areas led

to the displacement of an estimated 15,000 people from western Aleppo city, towards the coastal areas. In Raqqa governorate, nearly 21,000 people have been displaced to various parts of the governorate owing to fighting between YPG and ISIL. In Dar'a, following the takeover of Brigade 52 by the Free Syrian Army's Southern Front, some 15,000 people have reportedly been displaced.

20. My Special Envoy for Syria continues the Geneva consultations with Syrian, regional and international delegations, with a view to developing recommendations on the operationalization of the Geneva Communiqué. The Special Envoy also visited Damascus from 15 to 17 June to discuss the views of senior Syrian officials on the Geneva Consultations. At the conclusion of the visit, he released a statement condemning all attacks on civilians, underlining that the use of barrel bombs is unacceptable and that all Governments have the obligation under international humanitarian law to protect their civilians. On 4 June my Special Envoy also held discussions with the National Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces in Istanbul, Turkey. He expects the Geneva consultations to continue into July and in the coming weeks intends to brief me on his findings from that process.

B. Human rights

21. During the reporting period, OHCHR continued to gather information on human rights violations in the Syrian Arab Republic. The counter-terrorism court established in 2012 continued to prosecute civilians, including human rights defenders for their participation in anti-Government peaceful protests, in trials that violated minimum due process standards. On 13 May, the issuance of a verdict in the case of three human rights defenders from the Syria Centre for Media and Freedom of Expression was postponed for the tenth time. The three human rights defenders were last seen in Adhra prison in Damascus on 6 May, after which they were reportedly transferred to an undisclosed location.

22. ISIL continued to violate international humanitarian law and commit human rights abuses during the reporting period. For example, on 5 May, according to reports received by OHCHR, ISIL crucified and killed a 15-year-old boy after accusing him of stealing money and weapons from an ISIL vehicle. On 20 May, ISIL arrested a woman in Maadan town of rural Raqqa for alleged witchcraft, and she is reportedly awaiting execution. In Deir ez-Zor governorate, on 14 May, ISIL reportedly beheaded a man from al-Hawayij village for theft. In addition, a man was reportedly blindfolded and thrown off a building in Abu Kamal town on 17 May for his alleged sexual orientation.

23. In Palmyra/Tadmur, according to information gathered by OHCHR, ISIL reportedly carried out door-to-door searches for suspected Government agents and executed at least 14 civilians suspected of affiliation with the Government. According to OHCHR sources, it is estimated that some 60 civilians were executed by ISIL since its takeover of Palmyra/Tadmur. OHCHR cannot independently verify the number of those civilian casualties.

24. The fate of hundreds of prisoners and detainees who were reportedly detained at the Palmyra/Tadmur central prison remained unknown. Information received by OHCHR indicated that prior to retreating from the city, Government forces transferred all detainees and prisoners to detention centres in other cities, including

Homs. On 30 May, ISIL circulated photos purporting to show its members detonating explosives demolishing the prison's empty buildings.

25. On 10 May, local sources informed OHCHR that YPG had detained six civilians from al-Qamishli in Hasakeh and had taken them to an undisclosed location. The whereabouts of the arrested civilians remain unknown.

26. According to reports by the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, on 11 June the Nusra Front killed 23 members of the Druze community in the village of Ain Larooz in Idlib governorate. The incident was reportedly prompted by a dispute over the confiscation of a house. Following the incident, the Nusra Front and several non-State armed groups released a statement condemning the killing.

27. During the reporting period, Syrian cultural heritage sites continued to be under threat. Serious concerns have been expressed over the historical sites located in the city of Palmyra/Tadmur. On 23 May, ISIL entered the Palmyra/Tadmur museum, whose collection had been evacuated earlier, with the exception for some large items that could not be moved. On 27 May, the ISIL military chief in Palmyra/Tadmur announced the organization's intention to destroy the statues at the World Heritage site but not the site itself. As at 29 May, no damage was reported except for the alleged destruction of the ancient statue of the God Lion.

C. Humanitarian response

28. Some 12.2 million people require humanitarian assistance in the Syrian Arab Republic, including more than 5 million children. Around 7.6 million people are internally displaced and 4 million people have fled the Syrian Arab Republic to neighbouring countries and North Africa.

29. Despite the challenging operating environment, United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners continued to reach millions of people in need between 1 March and 31 May through all modalities from within the Syrian Arab Republic and across borders, pursuant to resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014). The World Food Programme (WFP) delivered food assistance to an average of 4.1 million people per month. The World Health Organization (WHO) distributed medicines and supplies to over 2.7 million people per month on average. UNICEF reached almost 2.2 million people per month on average with water, sanitation, hygiene, health, education and protection support, including an expansion of nutrition services throughout the country. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reached over 244,000 people per month on average with core relief items, as well as protection services. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) distributed agricultural supplies in support of 32,972 people per month on average. The International Organization for Migration reached an average of 194,182 people per month with multi-sector assistance. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) continued to provide support to up to 480,000 Palestine refugees on a monthly basis.

30. Cross-border deliveries continued during the reporting period. Between 1 March and 31 May, the United Nations and its implementing partners sent 50 shipments — 19 from Jordan and 31 from Turkey — to the Syrian Arab Republic under the terms of resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014), including food

assistance equivalent for over 1.8 million people;[2] non-food items for over 290,000 people; water and sanitation supplies for over 150,000 people; and medical supplies for some 660,000 treatments in Aleppo, Latakia, Idlib, Dar'a Quneitra and Hama governorates. Many of the medical supplies shipped can be reused and will benefit more patients in the next few months. In line with resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014), the United Nations notified the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic in advance of each shipment, including details of content, destination district and number of beneficiaries.

31. There continued to be a positive trend in the overall amount of United Nations cross-border assistance between 1 March and 31 May compared with the previous three months. There was a 131 per cent increase in the amount of food and a 77 per cent increase in the amount of health items shipped across borders during the reporting period compared with the previous three months. Lesser amounts of basic relief items and water and sanitation support were shipped across the border compared with the preceding three months, primarily as a result of the phasing out of winterization programmes and funding challenges.

32. The United Nations monitoring mechanism continued its operations in Jordan and Turkey. During the reporting period, the mechanism monitored a total of 1,309 trucks in 50 United Nations humanitarian shipments, confirming the humanitarian nature of each and notifying the Syrian authorities after each shipment had crossed the border. The mechanism continued to benefit from excellent cooperation with the Governments of Jordan and Turkey during the reporting period.

33. United Nations agencies continued to use the Nusaybin/Qamishly crossing with the consent of the Governments of the Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey during the reporting period. WFP completed the transportation of food rations sufficient for 230,000 people in both March and April, and 113,350 people in May. UNHCR delivered non-food items for 25,000 people through the crossing in April. UNICEF also completed the transportation of water treatment to cover the needs of 2.1 million people in April, along with multisectoral supplies for 100,000 people.

34. Four inter-agency convoys across conflict lines proceeded between 1 March and 31 May 2015. On 3 March, teams reached Talbiseh in Homs governorate, completing the planned delivery of aid to 60,000 people. A three-phase convoy to Rastan in Homs was carried out over March and April, delivering aid to approximately 81,000 people. Despite approval by local authorities, medical equipment and supplies were removed from the convoys to Talbiseh and Rastan by local security forces. During April and early May, an inter-agency convoy reached Yalda, Babila and Beit Sahm in several phases in order to respond to the influx of people displaced from Yarmouk and to the needs of vulnerable host communities and previously displaced families, with over 26,000 people reached overall. On 13 May, an inter-agency convoy, through the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, delivered multisectoral assistance to 50,000, as well as health supplies for almost 190,000 people, to Big Orem in Aleppo governorate.

[2] Assistance by the World Food Programme is provided in the form of monthly rations; some beneficiaries were assisted more than once over the three-month reporting period. Accordingly, the number of unique beneficiaries (namely, people reached once or more than once over the reporting period) is approximately 1.3 million. The 1.8 million figure refers to the cumulative amount of food rations dispatched through the cross-border modality over the three months.

35. In addition to inter-agency convoys, United Nations agencies also conducted single-agency convoys across conflict lines during the reporting period. For example, UNRWA, UNICEF and WFP provided assistance to Yalda, Babila and Beit Sahm. WFP also provided food assistance for 50,000 people in Al Wa'er in Homs during April and May. In May, WHO delivered medical assistance for over 143,000 treatments through cross-line deliveries to eastern Aleppo city.

36. Non-governmental organizations continued to reach millions of people with urgent food, health, sanitation and other assistance in the Syrian Arab Republic, including through the provision of ongoing services between March and May. They reached over 1.2 million people per month on average with multisectoral assistance, including services and assistance for over 500,000 people on average per month in Aleppo; over 280,000 people in Idlib; and over 260,000 people in Dar'a. Access by non-governmental organizations to people in need continued to be hampered by increased conflict in Aleppo and Idlib governorates during the reporting period. Furthermore, NGOs reported significant protection concerns in May, with scores of attacks against civilians, medical facilities, humanitarian personnel and premises in Aleppo and Idlib governorates. The attacks resulted in deaths and injury, widespread damage to infrastructure and the temporary suspension of relief services.

D. Humanitarian access

37. Despite significant deliveries of humanitarian assistance to people in need between March and May, the delivery of humanitarian assistance remained extremely challenging during the reporting period owing to active conflict, insecurity and shifting front lines, deliberate obstructions and interference by the parties, including restrictions on movements and burdensome administrative procedures. In addition to the challenges above, the level of funding for humanitarian activities also continued to be outpaced by the scale of needs. The 2015 Syria Regional Crisis Response Plan was 25 per cent funded as at 15 June.

38. Active conflict, insecurity, as well as shifting front lines, continued to inhibit deliveries in the Syrian Arab Republic during the reporting period. Intensified conflict in several governorates hindered the effective delivery of humanitarian assistance and access to essential services, such as health and education. For example, UNICEF has been unable to send water treatment supplies to 1.3 million people in Deir ez-Zor and Raqqa governorates for the past 12 months owing to the difficulty of delivering humanitarian supplies through ISIL-controlled areas. Elsewhere, the security situation in Idlib governorate, particularly along key access routes, has constrained the effective delivery of aid, including the implementation of polio and measles vaccination campaigns over the past three months. In the southern area of the Syrian Arab Republic, the capture by non-State armed groups of the Nasib crossing with Jordan in April and the subsequent closure of the border continued to disrupt humanitarian operations. Increased insecurity was noted along the Salamiyah-Aleppo road during the reporting period, a major supply route used by the United Nations for reaching Aleppo from within the country.

39. Deliberate interference and restrictions also prevented aid delivery. Following the closure by ISIL of the humanitarian operations of a number of non-governmental organizations in January, WFP continued to suspend its food deliveries to ISIL-controlled territory. As a result, some 700,000 people in need in

Aleppo, Hasakeh, Deir ez-Zor and Raqqa governorates have not reached with food assistance over the past three months. ISIL did not permit polio or measles vaccination campaigns to be conducted, neither through mobile teams nor in health centres during the reporting period. Furthermore, following the ISIL takeover of Palmyra/Tadmur at the end of May, ISIL reportedly seized the Syrian Arab Red Crescent warehouse in the city, which contained food assistance for 35,000 people and hygiene kits for 15,000.

40. In response to reports of United Nations humanitarian assistance supplies having been found at the Government's Mastoumah military camp in Idlib in mid-May, the United Nations raised concerns about the alleged diversion and requested that the Government investigate the matter. The United Nations reiterated that humanitarian assistance is provided solely to civilians in need and that its diversion for any other use jeopardizes the principles of humanitarian action, undermines the integrity of the programmes and the Organization's reputation.

41. No major changes in the administrative procedures required by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic were reported over the past three months. The current administrative procedures continued to delay or limit the delivery of assistance by United Nations agencies.

42. The United Nations continued to face challenges with regard to the issuance of visas for international staff members during the reporting period. Since 1 March, a total of 278 requests for visas (new visas and renewals) were submitted, of which 210 visas were approved. Many of the approvals were for three-month visas only. Fourteen visas were rejected, bringing the total number of rejections in 2015 to 30, exclusive of the 4 United Nations staff members who had been declared personae non gratae in February, compared with a total of 28 visa rejections for the whole of 2014. As at 31 May, 85 visa requests by the United Nations (new and renewal) remained pending, 42 of which had not yet exceeded the 15-working day processing limit and 43 of which had. In a positive development, a number of missions were provided with short-term visas in May and June.

43. Since 1 March, the number of international non-governmental organizations approved by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic have been reduced from 16 to 15 following the decision of 1 international non-governmental organization to withdraw its presence in the country in April to focus on strengthening and building the capacity of its national organization. International non-governmental organizations continued to face a series of administrative hurdles and restrictions that had an impact on their ability to operate. They remain restricted in their ability to partner with national humanitarian organizations, open sub-offices, conduct missions, join inter-agency convoys and undertake independent needs assessments. Regarding visas for international non-governmental organizations, progress was noted between March and May, with 26 visas approved, 2 visas rejected and 8 visas, submitted in mid-May, pending.

44. The number of national non-governmental organizations authorized to partner with the United Nations has increased from 114 to 118 since 1 March. During the reporting period, five were added by the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to the list in Damascus, Homs and Latakia governorates. One operating in Deir ez-Zor was removed from the list. As at 31 May, the 118 national non-governmental organizations were authorized to operate 173 branches across the country. Some governorates, such as Rif Dimashq, Quneitra, Idlib, Dar'a and Raqqa, have an

insufficient number of national non-governmental organizations authorized relative to the level of humanitarian need and response required.

45. In 2015, the United Nations submitted 48 requests to the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic for inter-agency convoys to access besieged, hard-to-reach and other areas located across conflict lines in the country, including one for an airlift. Following the meetings of the joint committee held on 9 April and 17 June, 20 requests for access to besieged, hard-to-reach and other areas across front lines were approved in principle by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, of which 7 have been completed and two partially completed. Altogether, the completed and partially completed convoys reached an estimated 426,500 people in need. The remaining 11 approved requests are at various stages of preparations, leaving 16 requests awaiting approval from the Government. Twelve requests were put on hold by the United Nations owing to insecurity.

46. Access to the 4.8 million people in hard-to-reach and besieged areas remains a grave concern. Between 1 March 2015 and 31 May 2015, United Nations agencies and partners reached 44 of the 131 hard-to-reach and besieged locations (34 per cent) on average per month during the reporting period. United Nations agencies and partners reached 25 locations with food assistance and agricultural support for 667,457 people per month; 13 locations with health support for 259,612 medical treatments; 18 locations with water, sanitation and hygiene for an average of 716,417 people per month; and 12 locations with core relief items for about 42,976 people per month. Of the 131 hard-to-reach locations, 65 (50 per cent) were not reached; 22 (17 per cent) have been reached in one of the past three months; 23 (18 per cent) have been reached twice; and 21 (16 per cent) have been reached three times. There has been no tangible improvement in the number of hard-to-reach locations accessed between March and May, compared with the preceding three months.

Besieged areas

47. Of the 4.8 million people in hard-to-reach areas, some 422,000 remain besieged in the Syrian Arab Republic, including 167,500 people besieged by Government forces in eastern Ghouta and Darayya; 26,500 people besieged by non-State armed groups in Nubul and Zahra; and 228,000 people besieged by ISIL in the Government-controlled western neighbourhoods of Deir ez-Zor city. Since early April, Yarmouk experienced an escalation of violence, infiltration by ISIL and the subsequent flight of several thousand Palestine refugees and Syrians to adjacent communities in the south-eastern part of the country. With the facilitation of Syrian authorities and local community leaders, United Nations agencies and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent have distributed humanitarian assistance to the displaced and host communities, and to those still inside Yarmouk, provided that they were able to travel safely back and forth from the camp to Yalda, Babila and Beit Sahm to receive and bring back assistance. On days when access to these locations was permitted, UNRWA was able to make significant deliveries of humanitarian assistance and to provide some medical and dental care to civilians. Nonetheless, since 8 June, access for UNRWA to the three neighbourhoods has been on hold due to the sudden withdrawal of authorizations by the Government. Separately, United Nations agencies and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent have continued to provide sustained assistance to affected people in Yalda, Babila and Beit Sahm. While no precise, verifiable figures are available, it is estimated that several thousands of

civilians remain inside Yarmouk. No humanitarian access has been granted directly inside the camp since 28 March.

48. In eastern Ghouta, some 163,500 people remain besieged by Government forces. United Nations assistance reached besieged locations in eastern Ghouta twice during the reporting period, including WHO contributing medical assistance sufficient for over 22,047 treatments through a Syrian Arab Red Crescent convoy travelling to Douma in eastern Ghouta in early May.

49. In Darayya, Rif Dimashq, about 4,000 people remain besieged by Government forces. No United Nations assistance reached Darayya during the reporting period. People in the area have not been assisted by the United Nations since October 2012.

50. In Nubul and Zahra, about 26,500 people remain besieged by non-State armed groups. No United Nations assistance reached the two areas during April and May, although there were consistent and credible reports that access to and from the enclave for both commercial goods and people had improved during the reporting period.

51. In the Government-controlled western neighbourhoods of Deir ez-Zor city, some 228,000 people remain besieged by ISIL. Some United Nations assistance reached the besieged area between March and May, including 140 sheep provided by FAO in March; 695 medical treatments provided by WHO through a local partner in May; and water, sanitation and hygiene support for over 17,000 people provided by UNICEF in April and May. Separately, the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and ICRC airlifted more than 100 tons of rice and oil, as well as medical supplies, to the besieged parts of Deir ez-Zor city in April and May. Also in May, the Government approved a series of emergency airlifts to be conducted by the United Nations to the besieged Government-held districts of the city. The airlifts will be conducted from Damascus using commercial airfreight, and planning is under way. On 9 June, the Ministry of Health airlifted WHO supplies to the besieged parts of Deir ez-Zor city, including six tons of essential medicines.

52. Parties to the conflict further restricted access to besieged areas between March and May 2015. Over the three months, the United Nations and partners reached an average of 1.4 per cent of people with food, compared with 0.4 per cent in the preceding three months; and 2 per cent of people with health assistance, not including polio vaccines, compared with 0.08 per cent in the previous three months. No basic relief items have been delivered to besieged areas during the reporting period, compared with 0.4 per cent in the previous three months.

Free passage of medical supplies, personnel and equipment

53. WHO and its implementing partners delivered medicines and medical supplies for 8.1 million treatments to local health authorities, non-governmental organizations and private medical facilities in 12 governorates within the Syrian Arab Republic between 1 March and 31 May 2015. That figure represents nearly four times the number of treatments compared with the previous three months, when nearly 2 million treatments were delivered in 13 governorates. The increase is attributable to an increase in agency-specific deliveries to hard-to-reach areas, especially to Aleppo, as well as inter-agency convoys.

54. During the reporting period, some 612,046 treatments were delivered to hard-to-reach locations and through cross-line deliveries in Aleppo, Hasakeh, Damascus,

Dar'a, Deir ez-Zor, Homs, and Rif Dimashq governorates, compared with 171,733 treatments in the previous three months. In early May, following approval from the Government, WHO contributed medical assistance sufficient for over 22,047 treatments to a Syrian Arab Red Crescent convoy to Douma in eastern Ghouta. Additional approvals have been sought to provide assistance on a monthly basis to Douma. In May, WHO delivered medical assistance for over 143,000 treatments through cross-line deliveries to eastern Aleppo city. WHO also delivered 695 medical treatments through a local partner to the besieged areas in Deir ez-Zor city controlled by the Government.

55. Between March and May 2015, three nationwide immunization campaigns were conducted: two against polio in March and May and one against measles in April. None of the campaigns were able to reach their planned targets since the security situation halted the full implementation of the campaign in Idlib governorate, while ISIL did not permit the campaigns to be conducted in Raqqa and parts of Deir ez-Zor and Aleppo governorates. As a result, a total of 550,000 children were not vaccinated against polio in March, and 1.1 million children were not vaccinated against measles in April. Preliminary results of the May polio campaign revealed that 2.1 million children were vaccinated out of the targeted 2.9 million. A number of districts in Homs, Aleppo, Idlib, Deir ez-Zor and Rif Dimashq governorates were not able to implement the campaign owing to active fighting.

56. Despite the significant increase in the delivery of medical assistance during the reporting period, access to medical supplies and equipment continued to be restricted to some areas as a result of insecurity and access constraints by parties to the conflict. Medical items and surgical supplies were removed from four convoys to Homs, Aleppo and Rif Dimashq governorates, resulting in 78,902 people being deprived of lifesaving medical treatments. Furthermore, with the intensification of conflict in several governorates and the increasing number of hospitals and health facilities affected by the conflict, there were reports of significant gaps in basic medical supplies and surgical equipment, including maternal and child health services in many areas.

57. During the reporting period, WHO sent 12 requests to deliver medical assistance to 38 hard-to-reach and cross-line locations in seven governorates: Aleppo, Dar'a, Deir ez-Zor, Damascus, Hama, Rif Dimashq and Idlib. With the exception of the convoy to Douma which proceeded, other requests have gone unanswered.

58. Attacks on medical facilities, ambulances, and medical personnel continued during the reporting period. In May, Physicians for Human Rights documented 15 attacks on 14 medical facilities, all of which were air strikes by Government forces, representing the highest number of attacks the organization had documented in a single month since the start of the conflict. Six attacks occurred in Idlib, five in Aleppo, two in Deir ez-Zor, and two in Hama governorates. In May, the organization documented the deaths of 10 medical personnel, of whom at least 6 had been targeted or killed in the line of duty. Seven had been killed by Government forces, 1 by ISIL, and 2 by unknown forces. Two of the deaths had occurred in Aleppo, two in Hama, two in Idlib, one in Damascus, one in Deir ez-Zor, one in Homs and one in Raqqa.

59. Since the start of the conflict, Physicians for Human Rights has documented 271 attacks on 202 separate medical facilities: 243 of the facilities were hit by

Government forces, 11 by non-State armed groups, 6 by ISIL and the Nusra Front, 1 by anti-ISIL coalition forces and 10 by unknown forces. Aleppo and Idlib governorates had the highest number of attacks with 68 and 44 attacks respectively. In total, the organization has documented the deaths of 633 medical personnel: 611 killed by Government forces, 6 by non-State armed groups, 5 by ISIL and 11 by unknown forces.

Safety and security of staff and premises

60. On 2 May, one staff member of UNRWA was injured by mortar fire on the Midan area of Aleppo.

61. On 6 May, a Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteer was killed and four were injured in Douma. On 15 May, another incident occurred in Al Dhameer in Rif Dimashq, killing one Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteer.

62. On 20 May, a staff member of an international non-governmental organization was killed when air strikes hit the market in Darkoush town in Idlib governorate. Prior to that, a staff member of another international non-governmental organization was killed when air strikes hit Darkoush town on 26 April.

63. A total of 32 United Nations staff members, 28 of whom are UNRWA staff, continue to be detained or missing. The total number of humanitarian workers killed in the conflict since March 2011 is 77, including 17 staff members of the United Nations, 45 Syrian Arab Red Crescent staff members and volunteers, 8 volunteers and staff members of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society and 7 staff members of international non-governmental organizations. Of the 77, 10 have been killed since 1 January 2015.

III. Observations

64. The parties to the conflict continued to show an utter disregard for the most basic rules of international humanitarian law and their obligations to protect civilians with horrific consequences for the people of the Syrian Arab Republic. I am particularly concerned about reports that the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic continues to indiscriminately drop barrel bombs on defenceless civilians in populated neighbourhoods. I am also concerned by the indiscriminate and relentless use of mortars and shelling of residential neighbourhoods by non-State armed groups. Symbols of community life — markets, bakeries, schools, hospitals, transportation hubs, mosques, churches — have been reduced to rubble. Such attacks must stop immediately. I again remind all the parties to the conflict that the deliberate targeting of civilians is a war crime and that those behind the attacks should be held responsible.

65. Children continue to bear the brunt of this horrific conflict. Children have been killed, injured and maimed, suffering the direct consequences of the indiscriminate violence of the parties to the conflict. Grave violations of children's rights continue with total impunity. I remain extremely concerned that schools continue to be attacked and used for military purposes. More than 2 million children inside the Syrian Arab Republic are not in school as a consequence of the occupation, destruction and insecurity of schools. With increasing numbers of

children being recruited to fight, the vulnerability and lack of protection for children will have profound and long-lasting consequences for the country and the region.

66. The United Nations and partners continue to require the use of all modalities to deliver assistance to meet the needs of Syrians severely affected by the conflict. Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 2165 (2014), as extended by the Council in resolution 2191 (2014), there has been a tangible difference on the ground, enabling the United Nations and its partners to reach more people in need, particularly in areas that had previously been inaccessible. In the light of the scale-up of cross-border assistance over the past six months, cross-border operations have become a vital delivery mechanism for the United Nations, enabling agencies to reach some areas in a more regular and sustainable manner than ever before and complementing the tremendous work carried out by non-governmental organizations over the past few years.

67. The United Nations monitoring mechanism is fulfilling its mandate as envisaged by the Security Council, ensuring the strictly humanitarian nature of United Nations operations. The United Nations will continue to adapt the scale of the mechanism to ensure that it has the capacity to do the job required while remaining light and flexible.

68. The positive developments should not take attention away from those who continue to deliberately hinder access to people who desperately need assistance. Despite the tremendous efforts of humanitarian organizations, millions of people still have insufficient or no assistance at all. I again urge the parties to the conflict to remember their obligations to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded access to all those in need, particularly those in hard-to-reach and besieged locations, who have remained cut off from assistance for months.

69. My Special Envoy for Syria continues to hold discussions with the parties to the conflict as a part of the ongoing Geneva consultations in an effort to find a political solution to the country's five-year-long conflict. The goal is ambitious, but the Organization must not lose sight of it. I stress again that there is no military solution to the crisis. Only political action can address the underlying causes of the conflict. I urge all parties to engage positively in the consultations launched by my Special Envoy on operationalizing the Geneva Communiqué.

70. I also ask the Council to take urgent action in the face of the continuing atrocities and human rights abuses taking place in the Syrian Arab Republic on a daily basis. Lack of action will throw the country deeper into chaos and deprive the country of a peaceful and prosperous future.

Annex

Information on the review by the Security Council of paragraphs 2 and 3 of resolution 2165 (2014), pursuant to paragraph 3 of resolution 2191 (2014)

1. Pursuant to paragraph 3 of resolution 2191 (2014), the Security Council decided to conduct a six-month review of the implementation of paragraphs 2 and 3 of resolution 2165 (2014). The information contained in the present annex covers the period under review.

2. Following the adoption of resolution 2165 (2014) on 24 July, the Secretary-General requested the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and the Emergency Relief Coordinator to work on the establishment of the monitoring mechanism, including its deployment. On 16 July, the Secretary-General deployed an advance team of the monitoring mechanism to Turkey. The first cross-border shipment crossed from Bab al-Salam on 24 July. Operations started in Jordan on 6 August, and on 20 August from Bab al-Hawa.

3. Since 1 December, the United Nations has utilized three of the four border crossings authorized by the Security Council under resolution 2165 (2014) — Al-Ramtha with Jordan, and Bab al-Hawa and Bab al-Salam with Turkey. Since 1 December, 92 shipments — 33 from Jordan and 59 from Turkey — have crossed into the Syrian Arab Republic, including 38 from Bab al-Hawa, 21 from Bab al-Salam and 33 from Al-Ramtha. The Al Yaroubiyah crossing with Iraq has not been utilized since the adoption of resolution 2165 (2014) owing to the security situation in north-western Iraq. The United Nations continues to monitor the status of Al Yaroubiyah and other border crossings and assess their feasibility for use by the United Nations.

4. The United Nations and its implementing partners have gradually scaled up their cross-border assistance pursuant to resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014), ensuring the efficient use of the available border crossings. The 92 shipments delivered since 1 December have included food assistance for 2.6 million people; non-food items for over 1 million people; medical supplies and treatments for over 1 million people; and water and sanitation supplies for over 600,000 people.

5. There has been a significant scale-up in the amount of assistance delivered across key sectors over the past six months. For example, food sufficient for 1.8 million people was shipped between March and May 2015, compared with 778,000 between December 2014 and February 2015 and 170,000 between September and November 2014. Similarly, medical treatments sufficient for some 660,000 people were shipped between March and May 2015, compared with 375,000 between December 2014 and February 2015 and 190,000 between September and November 2014. It is important to note that United Nations cross-border operations have complemented the cross-border work undertaken by non-governmental organizations that were operational prior to the adoption of the resolution and that deliver assistance and services to hundreds of thousands of people every month.

6. United Nations cross-border operations have shipped assistance to districts in Aleppo, Idlib, Hama and Latakia governorates from Bab al-Hawa and Bab al-Salam crossing with Turkey, while assistance has been shipped to districts in Dar'a and Quneitra governorates from the Al-Ramtha crossing with Jordan.

7. The United Nations monitoring mechanism has confirmed the humanitarian nature of each consignment it has monitored without any irregularities. Throughout the mandate, the mechanism has introduced new tools to aid its activities including security seals and tamper evident tapes.

8. The adoption of resolutions 2165 (2014) and 2191 (2014) has contributed to increased access to people in need, enabling the United Nations and partners to reach those among them who had been largely inaccessible prior to the resolutions.[a] With accessibility to different parts of the country evolving as a result of the impact of cross-border operations, as well as conflict dynamics and shifting front lines and control by parties, the United Nations reduced the number of hard-to-reach locations both from within the country and across borders in December 2014, from 287 to 131 locations. A significant number of the locations removed from the list have been reached by either the United Nations or non-governmental organization partners since the adoption of resolution 2165 (2014). The importance of cross-border operations as a modality for the United Nations over the past few months was evident. For example, cross-border operations enabled the World Food Programme to maintain deliveries of food to those areas after the onset of heavy fighting in Idlib governorate in March, which forced the interruption of all cross-line deliveries in opposition-held areas to the governorate.

9. The operating environment for cross-border operations remains challenging, particularly in light of the changing front lines in the northern area of the Syrian Arab Republic over the past months, including territorial advances and the presence of ISIL. Insecurity in the proximity of the Bab al-Salam border crossing has meant that it has been non-operational at times over the past months. Another challenge over the past six months has been the identification of suitable partners able to handle the delivery of assistance at scale, as well as delays in finalizing agreements with new partners that constrained the effective scaling-up of operations. Furthermore, lack of funding for agencies has limited the amount of assistance that has been delivered and made long-term planning for cross-border programmes challenging.

10. Access to people in need from within the Syrian Arab Republic via cross-line deliveries continues to be challenging overall. The Syrian humanitarian country team has looked into the possible application of a clause in the resolutions that would enable the United Nations and its partners to conduct cross-line deliveries through a notifications system, as is done for cross-border deliveries. Given the difficulty in effectively negotiating ceasefires and guaranteeing staff security through the notification system for cross-line deliveries, the team has not been able to make use of that provision due to operational and security constraints.

11. Given the deteriorating humanitarian situation in the Syrian Arab Republic and the rapidly changing frontlines, the United Nations and its partners continue to require all modalities, including regular programmes, cross-border and cross-line operations, to effectively meet the needs of millions of Syrians wherever they may be in the country.

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[a] In his ninth report (S/2014/840) on the implementation of Security Council resolutions 2139 (2014) and 2165 (2014), the Secretary-General detailed access trends since the adoption of resolution 2165 (2014) and the commencement of cross-border operations in July 2014 and November 2014, noting the improved reach by the United Nations and non-governmental organizations to hard-to-reach locations in Aleppo, Idlib, Dar'a, and Quneitra governorates.